

Give It To Me Straight

10 Questions To Ask A Church When Considering Membership

Face it, figuring out which Church to join can be a lot like trying to figure out which menu item to order at a restaurant at which you have never eaten. Some items look better than others while some items are definitely not what you want for dinner!

In response to this difficulty, many do not attend Church or attend without signing up for membership. While the purpose of this article is not to expound upon the biblical COMMAND to formally be under the care of a local Church, it should be noted that

1. Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 call all believers members of the body of Christ and, in context, the term body is being used of individual Churches in both Rome and Corinth. Here, the believer is commanded to faithfully serve in the local Church.
2. Acts 1:15 indicates that the Jerusalem Church had 120 people before Acts 2:41, after the Spirit brought about faith on the day of Pentecost, and 3000 people were added. This teaches that there were official records of who was in and who was out.
3. Matthew 18:17 indicates that the God-ordained remedy for a person refusing to repent from sin is the removal of that person from the Church. This shows that the person was part of something from which they could be removed and that the Church has the responsibility to oversee the conduct of its members.

Those items considered, how does one pick which Church to join? After all, there are so many: Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Baptist, Methodist, Latter-day Saints, Pentecostal. Further, there are many to pick one or the other: security (if I leave, I won't go to heaven), family history (it is where my parents and grandparents served), music (it is conservative like me or it is progressive like me), programs (this Church has a great program for kids), location (this Church is closest to my house), social contacts (my friends or potential clients go there), doctrine (it believes what I believe), or impressive personalities (the pastor is very popular).

Are these good reasons? Are they bad reasons? Are they the best reasons? How can a person considering membership cut through the fan fair or externals of a Church to see what a particular Church really is, believes, does, and desires?

Now, some will immediately object "You really expect me to be THAT detailed? You really expect me to be that concerned?" To such questions I

emphatically answer "YES!" If you are buying a car, you get the facts. If you find out you have cancer, you get the facts. If your child wants to spend the night at the house of a friend whom you have never met, you get the facts. How much more should we concern ourselves with the local Church to which we will give our time, energy, and resources and under the authority of which we will place ourselves for accountability?

Admittedly, this list may make other pastors not invite me to speak at their Churches' next men's rally. These questions lay bear a Church's priorities, values, struggles, and successes. Admittedly, as well, this list makes the assumption that the reader himself knows Jesus, has a level of spiritual discernment, and desires to make Christ known to the world. With that understanding, the following 10 questions are recommended. Though there are other questions that can be asked, these questions will help to reveal a Church's heart by examining its beliefs and fruit.

1. May I Have A Copy Of Your Church Doctrinal Statement?
2. May I Have A Copy Of Your Church Covenant?
3. What Is The Mission Of This Church And How Does You Accomplish It?
4. On Average, How Many People Per Year Come To Know Christ As A Direct Result Of Your Ministry?
5. How Does This Church Seek To Encourage And Challenge One Another?
6. In What Areas Does This Church Work Well Together?
7. In What Areas Does This Church Struggle?
8. Is This Church Financially Sound Or Does It Have Significant Debt?
9. What music do you use? What are your goals in using it?
10. In What Ways Do You Practice Separation From Worldliness And False Teaching?